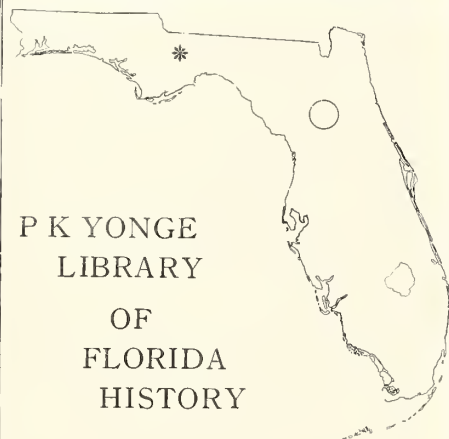


# Cubans in Florida

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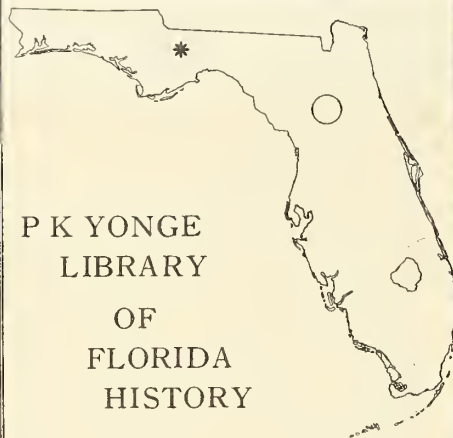
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## CUBANS IN FLORIDA

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## Cubans in Florida

## I

## ORIGINE, MIGRATIONS, INDUSTRY, UNIONS

The 16,000 persons of Cuban birth or descent in Florida have contributed more than their share to the industrial and cultural life of the State. Some 12,000 of them live among the 8,000 Spaniards and 8,000 Italians of Ybor City and West Tampa (the Latin colonies of Tampa). Another 2,500 are concentrated in an exclusively Cuban settlement in Key West, while the remainder live in Miami and other Florida cities. They constitute approximately one-third of the white populations of Key West and Tampa.

In the diversity of their racial origins the Cubans are almost as cosmopolitan as the Americans. The Spaniards who conquered and settled Cuba were themselves made up of a multitude of racial strains, including the Iberian, Moor, Roman, Basque, Celt, Visigoth, Mauretanian, and Jew. The first Spaniards to settle in Cuba were mostly of Asturian, Castilian, and Andalusian origin.

For the most part the Spaniards left their native country in an effort to better their economic condition, although many of them were seeking to escape the Inquisition. In one instance, when an Andalusian woman posed as a priest and killed a leader of the Inquisition, hundreds of Andalusians were imprisoned and sent to Cuba.



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There were other immigrations of Spaniards from Santander, Galicia, the Canary Islands, and many peasants from Catalonia and the Basque Province, who formed the Cuban guajiro peasantry. Besides the Spaniards, a considerable number of Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Germans settled in Cuba. A sizeable group of Chinese were also allowed to enter, "so the Spaniards could better exploit us," the Cubans say.

The original Indian inhabitants were enslaved and put to work in the mines where they soon sickened and died. Their revolts resulted in the virtual extermination of the men, while the women were taken as wives or concubines by the Spaniards. The Indian strain is still apparent in some Cubans, particularly among the peasantry.

There were ~~a few~~ <sup>some</sup> Moorish Africans among the Spanish conquerors of Cuba, and they left a few descendants of mixed blood. The first Negro slaves brought to the New World were taken to Cuba to work the sugar and tobacco plantations. By 1848 the Negro population of Cuba was more than half the total of the island, but today ~~the~~ whites comprise two-thirds of the total. This is partly due to the fact that mulattoes and octaroons now classify themselves as white, but more to the fact that the Negroes, since the end of the slave trade, have increased only by birth, whereas white immigration has continued.

As in all countries where Negroes live among whites, there has been considerable miscegenation in Cuba. But no matter



how pure the Spanish ancestry of the Cubans, they were discriminated against and considered inferior by the Spanish authorities, and this attitude was instrumental in creating the Cuban nationalistic spirit that finally culminated in the overthrow of Spanish rule.

Since its beginning the cigar industry had been marked by conflict between the Cuban workers on one hand and the Spanish manufacturers and government officials on the other. Serious rebellion broke out as early as 1716, in protest against the compulsory shipment of tobacco to Spain under heavy tariffs.

The Spanish Government retaliated by imposing additional taxes. Protesting demonstrations became numerous, and in 1817 a large group of rebellious Cubans marched into Havana, forcing the Governor to flee to Spain. The strife continued, with the Government promising to reduce the tariffs, yet failing to do so. When widespread rebellion again broke out in 1823, the Government enforced its edicts by mass assassinations.

A majority of the Cuban cigarmakers worked in small shops called chinchaleras, while others worked in their own homes or in the factories which were established in Havana and other cities.

The first cigar factory to be established in Key West was that of William H. Wall in 1831, which employed about 50 cigarmakers at a yearly payroll of \$50,000. Other chin-





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chaleras, or "buckeyes" as the Americans called them, were established in rapid succession, but up until 1868, when the Ten Years Warfare broke out in Cuba, the Key West cigar industry was still in its infancy.

At that time Vicente Martinez Ybor, a Spaniard who owned the famous El Principe de Gales factory in Havana, became interested in moving his factory to Key West in the hope of escaping the difficulties he was having with his Cuban cigar-makers' unions. With the encouragement and material assistance of Key West merchants, Ybor moved his factory to that city in 1869, and thus became the real founder of the cigar industry in Florida.

Ybor's factory proved highly successful in its new location, and was soon followed by La Rosa Espanola factory of Seidenberg and Company of New York. More and more factories came from Cuba, and were followed by hundreds of Cuban cigar-makers from Havana, Bejucal, San Antonio de los Banos, Guines, Santiago de las Vegas and other small towns near Havana. Upon learning from friends who had visited or immigrated to Key West that work was plentiful there, the cost of living low, and personal freedom high, these cigarmakers flocked to Key West in great numbers, taking their families with them. A sizeable Cuban colony soon developed, and in a short time the Cubans were no longer able to refer to Key West as La Isla Solariega (The Isolated Island).





With the cigarmakers came many Cuban revolutionaries, fleeing the oppression of the Spanish Government. These men set about establishing juntas in the United States to work for the liberation of Cuba.

In 1886 fire destroyed almost half of Key West, including the factories of Ybor and Sanches & Haya. Ybor had already considered moving to some other locality, in another attempt to escape from the pressure of the unions. However, he offered to purchase a tract of waste land, known as La Salina, in the remote northeastern part of Key West, but the price was too high and he began considering Galveston, Texas, as a new site.

But at this time he was visited by a friend, Gavino Gutierrez, a New York importer who had just surveyed Tampa as a prospective site for the establishment of a tropical fruit canning factory. He persuaded Ybor and Haya to investigate the advantages of Tampa, to which the South Florida Railroad had just been completed, and whose port was being developed.

In consideration of a \$4,000 tract of land offered free, both manufacturers decided to move their plants to Tampa. A race began to see which factory would be first to begin operations and to receive Tampa licence number 1. Haya imported his tobacco already stripped from New York, and he was therefore able to begin operations about a week before Ybor.

The manufacturers built homes for the new settlers, and



offered them for purchase on time payments. The passage of the settlers from Key West to Tampa was also paid by the manufacturers. The first immigrants were transported in the side-wheeler "Hutchinson," and were landed in flat-bottom boats. Later, when the "Hutchinson" went out of commission, the immigrants were transported by two other side-wheelers, the "Mascotte" and "Olivite."

When the cigarmakers arrived, Tampa was but a wilderness settlement comprising some four blocks of houses. The chief industry was cattle exporting. Ybor City was gradually built up on swampy ground. There were two large lagoons that would overflow after heavy rains and form a large lake. Snakes were numerous, and at night the frogs made a terrific noise. Another night-time hazard were the alligators which crawled out on Seventh Avenue--the main street--to travel from one lagoon to the other. It was necessary to carry a lantern to avoid them.

Seventh Avenue was paved with wooden blocks, and sidewalks were made of boards. These boards would ~~swell and~~ warp after heavy rains, and when the sun came out they would go back into place, leaving many nails protruding to snag the trousers of passers-by. One suburb of Ybor City came to be known as La Pachata, after the nick-name of the rent collector for the section.





Hardly a person failed to escape altogether from malaria and the other diseases which spread through <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ colonies because of the polluted drinking water, the swampy land, and the poor sanitary facilities. Plagues of gnats caused many cases of temporary blindness, and forced many people to wear goggles. Drinking water had to be strained to remove the insects and other foreign matter.

A cooperative fire department, called El Cuartel de Humanidad, was organized, and a small shed was purposely ignited to test its efficiency. The first fire engine was a spool of thin hose wound on an axle between two wheels, and this contraption was hauled by man-power along the six-foot-wide sidewalks, as the streets were too boggy. It was housed in a stable, and its water pressure came from a hand pump.

Transportation between Ybor City and Tampa was sporadically effected by small, puffy steam engines that ran along narrow-gauge track on a schedule of "once-in-a-while." It is said that the odds of arriving at one's destination aboard one of these locomotives was about 50-50. The engines were named after Fannie, wife <sup>of</sup> Ignacio Haya the manufacturer, and the daughters of Ybor, Teresita, Mirta, and Jennie.

There were relatively few women in Ybor City at first, and the prostitutes, even the Negro ones, did a thriving business. It was not at all uncommon to see long lines of men



in front of the Negro houses in the section called "The Scrub."

Meanwhile the cigar industry in Key West continued to grow by leaps and bounds. But the manufacturers who had moved to Key West in the hope of leaving labor unions behind were sadly disappointed, as the unions prospered in Key West quite as much as the manufacturers. Strikes for better wages, better working conditions, and in protest against discrimination against Cubans in favor of Spaniards, were frequent.

The wives of the cigarmakers were frequently employed as tobacco strippers, whose job was to remove the center stem from the leaves. These women were organized in a tobacco-strippers' union, one of the most active of the Cuban revolutionary groups in Key West.

In 1881 the tax on cigars was reduced by \$3 per thousand, and the cigarmakers sought to share in this increased profit by striking for a \$2 increase in the rate of pay. This strike was won by the cigarmakers, but by manipulation of the rates paid on certain types of cigars the manufacturers were able to actually pay the cigarmakers about \$6 less than formerly. Shortly afterward, the \$2 pay increase was rescinded; this precipitated another strike, which was lost by the workers, and an almost continuous series of strikes followed.



In spite of all this, by 1888 there were over 200 factories operating in Key West, employing 6,000 persons at an annual payroll of \$3,000,000. Some of the factories employed as many as 800 workers. Their weekly wages varied from about \$8 to \$55, but the average yearly earning was only approximately \$800. The industry reached its peak in Key West in 1890, when the 12,000 cigarmakers produced 100,000,000 cigars.

Key West was the cigar manufacturing center of the United States, and the industry constituted the axis upon which the economic life of the city revolved. Most of the factories produced clear Havana cigars, and imported their tobaccos from Vuelta Abajo, Las Villas, Manicaragua, and other famous Cuban fields. Many chinchaleras were in operation, some of which employed as many as 200 cigarmakers.

It was in 1889 that the power of the Key West unions was seriously threatened. A general strike was called, demanding that the rate of pay be increased by \$1, and that a weight committee be set up. During this strike many of the cigarmakers went to Tampa and Havana. The Tampa cigarmakers contributed a dollar from their salaries each week to aid the families of the Key West strikers. Early in 1890 the workers won the strike, and many of the Cuban and Spanish cigarmakers who had gone to Tampa and Havana returned to Key West. The Spaniards, however, found feeling against them so high that most of them returned





to Tampa, where they organized the Centro Espanol as a protective organization.

The Key West manufacturers encouraged the migration of Spanish cigarmakers from Cuba, however, and these imported workers were often given preferential employment. The unions accused the manufacturers of importing Spaniards to form a reserve of labor, to be used to break the strikes and strengthen the unions. When the manufacturers refused to stop importing Spanish labor, the Cuban unions called a general strike throughout the Key West industry. When Spaniards attempted to break the strike, rioting occurred and several factories were damaged.

Seidenberg, operator of La Rosa Espanola factory, thereupon declared that in the future he would employ Spanish workers only. His factory was kept closed, however, by the Cuban strikers, and he complained to the Key West board of trade. This body assured him that he would "receive not only the protection of the law, but the support of the citizens of Key West, who felt that the right of the people of any nationality to come to the United States to obtain work should not be infringed."

The Board of trade then appointed a committee, composed of the county judge, circuit court judge, a financier, a "militant Christian," and other such worthies, to go to Havana "to assure the Captain General that if any Spanish subjects desired



to come to Key West to work, they would receive the full protection of the law."

Meanwhile the striking Cuban workers threatened the lives of any Spaniards who might come from Cuba with the intention of breaking their strike. When the committee finally returned with a number of Spaniards, the atmosphere was tense and there were many threats of violence. A large delegation headed by Mayor Robert J. Perry met the boat, and escorted the Spaniards to a place of safety.

According to the Cuban historian Gerardo Castellano, this act of the Key West Anglo-Americans created such intense antagonism among the Cubans that feeling on the subject has affected all subsequent relations between the two groups, particularly in labor matters.

The Junta Revolucionario Cubano charged the collector of customs, the U.S. district attorney, and the Key West immigrant inspector with having aided and abetted a violation of the labor contract laws of the U.S. A committee that had gone to Tampa for the same purposes as the one which went to Havana, was charged with the same thing.

In spite of the protests of Mayor Perry, George W. Allen, and Jefferson B. Browne who went to Washington and conferred with the secretary of state, the attorney general, and the secretary of the treasury, the treasury department ruled that the





committee had committed a violation as charged, and ordered the Spaniards deported.

The committee retaliated by filing a complaint to the same effect as the Government charges, and bringing the complaint before U.S. Circuit Judge Alex Boorman who was in Key West. Judge Boorman ruled that "no contract, written or verbal, expressed or implied, had been made by the committee or anyone for them."

Nevertheless, the local immigrant inspectors were ordered by their Washington office to arrest and deport the Spaniards. Judge Boorman at once granted writs of habeas corpus, and the Spaniards were released under bond, pending an appeal before the Supreme Court. The appeal was never made, and there the matter still stands. The Spaniards later went to Tampe.



## II

### INSTITUTIONS

#### Education

A Cuban philosopher has said, "Education should not merely equip one to earn a living--it should also temper the character for life itself." Both the earning capacity and the character of the majority of Florida Cubans has suffered because of the inadequacy of the educational opportunities afforded them under Spanish, Cuban, and American rule.

During the four centuries that Spain ruled Cuba, formal education was available only to the small well-to-do class that could pay tuition at the private schools and universities, which were at their best in Havana. Rural children generally received no education except in their homes, although the few parish schools enrolled children without racial discrimination. In the schools conducted by the Catholic Church, the catechism was the chief study of the boys, while embroidery and music were taught to the girls.

"This inadequate educational system was maintained by the Spanish authorities in order that the Cubans might be kept in ignorance and therefore be more easily and completely exploited," Cuban writers have asserted.



Some wealthy Cuban families sent their sons to be educated in the United States, Spain, England, France, and Germany; and a number of these educated Cubans returned to take leading parts in the revolution.

Reading matter was heavily censored before being admitted to Cuba. The mass of the Cuban population first gained some knowledge of what was taking place in the outside world when a flood of reading matter was released on the island during the 20 years of British rule that began in 1762. The Cubans evinced an especially keen interest in the writers of the French Revolution, and their ignorance and provincialism were considerably relieved by this stimulus.

When Cuba was returned to Spain in 1782 the Spanish Governors of the island were more liberal than their predecessors, and they made some efforts to increase educational facilities. But King Charles IV declared that learning should not be made generally available, and also forbade prosperous Cubans to send their children abroad to study. These prohibitions were not repealed until 1802. During the Ten Years Warfare in Cuba (1868-78) all schools and universities were closed, and by the end of the period 66 percent of the island's population were illiterate.

By 1903 this percentage had decreased to 30 percent, but Cuban politicians followed in the footsteps of their Spanish predecessors, and their graft and neglect so deteriorated the





the school system that by 1924 more than 50 percent of the whites and 55 percent of the Negroes were illiterate. Under the dictatorship of Machado the universities and many schools were closed, and by 1935 more than 60 percent of the Cubans were again illiterate.

It is therefore not surprising that the majority of the Cuban cigarmakers who came to Florida had received little or no formal education in their native land. Most of those who had been educated had attended the night classes conducted by the Cuban labor unions; the unions also conducted day classes for the children of their members.

The outstanding educational factor in the life of the cigarmakers has been the system of having lectores, or readers, in the factories, a custom inaugurated in Cuba about 1880. The lectores were selected from the best qualified men available, and were paid by weekly sums contributed by each cigarmaker; in the large factories the lectores were well paid. They proved extremely popular with the workers because they stimulated them intellectually while at work, and kept them informed on current events without requiring them to further strain their eyes by reading at night after having used their eyes in the factories all day.

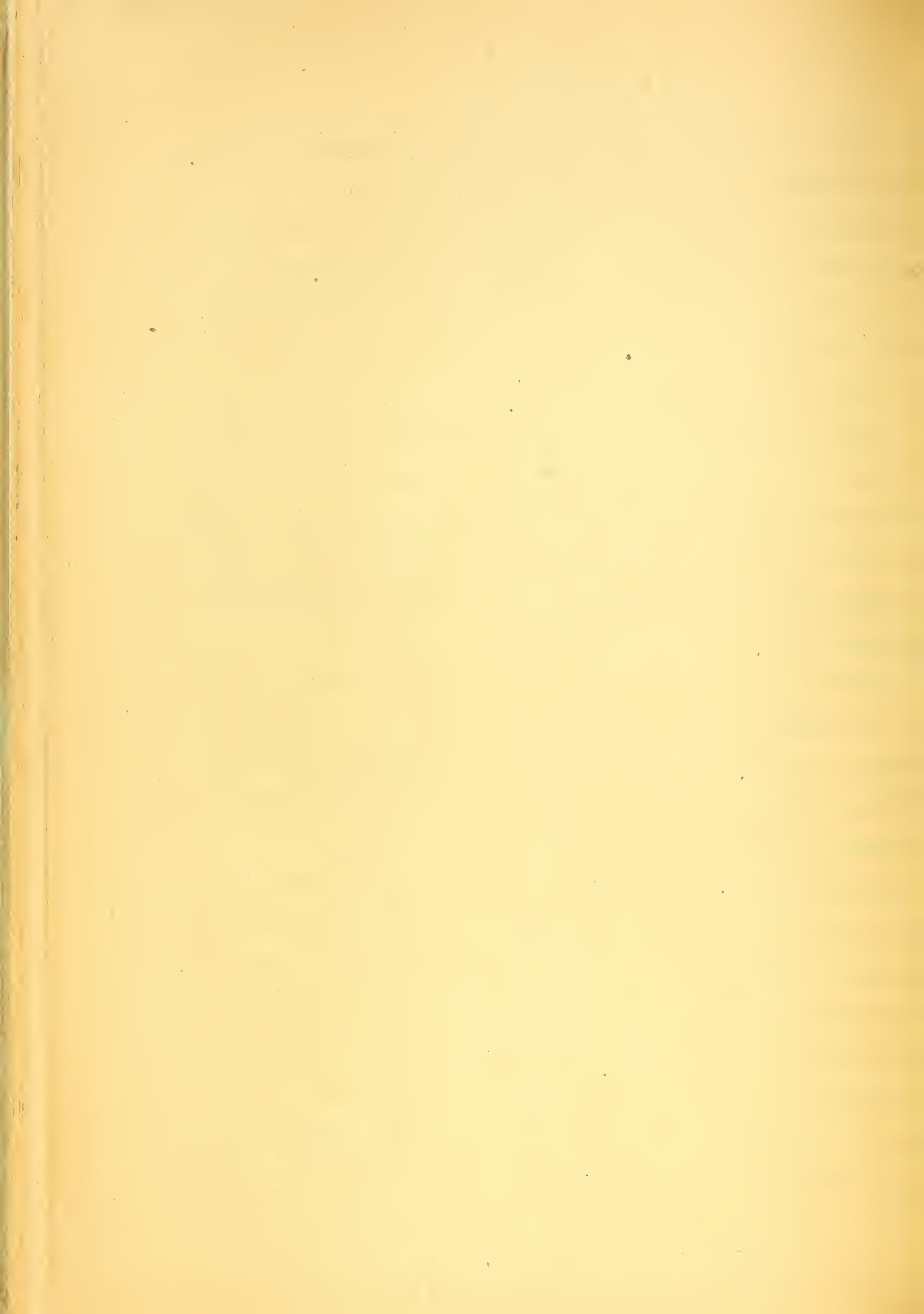
The material read by the lectores was chosen by a vote of the factory workers. From a platform called the "tribunal," the lectores read Spanish novels, Don Quixote, Les Miserables, and works dealing with the French Revolution and Garibaldi's enterprises. They read the speeches of the Cuban revolution-



ary leaders, material describing Bolivar's campaigns to free South America, and of other wars of independence. They thus inspired the cigarmakers with patriotic fervor--and consequently were greatly disliked by the Spanish manufacturers, who accused them of instigating the frequent strikes which characterized the industry.

Other works frequently selected by the cigarmakers to be read by the lectores included those of Gorky, Marx, Malatesta, and Tolstoi. Among the popular periodicals was the Tampa unions' paper, El Internacional; Despertad (Awaken), published in Key West and said to have been communistic; El Machete (The Cutlass), also reportedly communistic; Aurora (Dawn), socialist; Tierra y Libertad (Land and Liberty), an anarchist paper published in Barcelona.

The lectores were not only skilled in the use of Castillian Spanish, but most of them were also able to translate the Key West and Tampa newspapers and other material written in English. They imparted to the cigarmakers a wide oral knowledge of Castillian Spanish, with the result that today many of the cigarmakers are able to speak the language proficiently, employing extensive vocabularies, and yet are unable to read or write it. This is true not only of the Cubans and Spaniards, but also of the Italians, who tended to learn Spanish rather than English at first.





In 1932 the Tampa Cigar Manufacturers' Association voted to abolish the lectores from the factories, and this precipitated a bitter strike which was lost by the workers. Since then radios have been installed in some factories, and though they are tuned to Cuban stations, they are no substitute for the educational, inspirational, and recreational functions of the lector.

When the Cubans first arrived in Key West, and later when they went to Tampa, educational facilities were extremely poor and limited. Small private schools were opened, teaching mathematics and grammar in Spanish. San Carlos Institute in Key West, and the Circulo Cubano in Tampa, established schools to teach in Spanish.

At first the Cubans planned to eventually return to Cuba, and to educate their children there. But as they prospered in Florida they gradually abandoned the idea of leaving, and so began to enter their children in the American public schools that were established as Key West and Tampa grew.

The difficulty of language so handicapped the Cuban children that in a great many cases their educational progress was retarded. Thus it was common to find Cuban boys and girls still in grammar school at the age of 15 or 16. This led to many difficulties. For example, there were instances where 16 year-old Cuban girls would come home with the distressing message that "the principal put me over his lap, pulled up my dress, and spanked me with his bare hands!" In such cases the girls



were usually withdrawn from school by their parents. Trouble was also caused by Cuban boys who made love to their teachers, and then attacked the principal when he sought to punish them.

The schools have always had a strong appeal to Cuban boys and girls as a social institution, if not as an educational one. Carefully watched at home, the girls were anxious to attend school where they could meet and talk freely with boys. Some of them would play hookey and go picknicking or swimming, and it was not at all rare to find serious love affairs among grammar school students. Some of them left school to get married.

It came to be almost customary for Cuban children to leave school at the age of 14, and this led the school authorities to enforce a compulsory attendance law, enacted in 1919, which required all children between the ages of 7 and 16 inclusive to attend school. This had the desired effect, and many young people were taken off the streets and out of the factories and sent back to their class-rooms.

After entering high school Cuban students generally take an increased interest in their studies, and this is in turn reflected among their younger brothers and sisters. However, a relatively small percentage graduate from high school, and very few are able to attend college. The percentage of high school graduates is higher in Tampa than in Key West, because of the superior schools in the former city. The high school students are concentrating on commercial subjects, and quite a number enroll in business schools; their frequent inability to obtain employment is most disillusioning to them and their fellow students.





Cuban children learn Spanish orally in their homes, and their inability to speak English is a great handicap to them upon entering school. The Tampa schools maintain pre-primer classes where the rudiments of English are taught the Latin <sup>children</sup> school, but no such service is available in Key West. The Cubans soon become bilingual, and those in Tampa are often trilingual, speaking Spanish, English, and Italian.

The Cubans have always been regarded as presenting a special problem to school officials. In 1904, J. V. Harris, superintendent of public instruction in Monroe County (Key West), reported to his State superintendent that he considered "compulsory education to be incompatible with personal rights"; and in 1908 he reported that "strict legislation is needed for the separation of white and Cuban children."

These sentiments were seemingly endorsed in 1936 by B. M. Duncan, principal of the Key West Division Street School, who said, "Many other people felt that a public high school would be overcrowded with poorer Cuban children whose parents have as a rule contributed very little to public education in Key West. In the then existing high schools, the Catholic and Methodist schools, only Cubans of the better class could afford to pay tuition fees. Those who desired higher learning might pay for it in one of these schools or send their children to some school elsewhere. There was a skepticism of the masses as to the justice of everybody paying for the advanced education of somebody's child."





Principal Duncan also explained the comparative inefficiency of ~~the~~ Key West schools when he said, "Teachers were usually chosen from the ranks of local applicants regardless of their qualifications for teaching." It is ~~also~~ an interesting fact that physical punishment is still administered to Key West school children, by both teachers and principals, in spite of State laws to the contrary.

In common with most American public school students, and especially those in the South, the Cubans have been afflicted with the traditional and antiquated curriculum that imparts a smattering of useless knowledge about everything in general and nothing in particular. However, the classical form of popular education is being speedily altered under the nationwide program of training for defense. Where the long-time campaigns of progressive educators failed, the machinations of Hitler succeeded; today the public school curriculum is more functional than it has ever been, and the fact that its trainees are being equipped to further military efforts will not prevent them from utilizing their skills in more constructive channels when the opportunity arises.

Hard times have forced a great many of ~~the~~ young people to leave school before graduating. The specific reason varies but slightly; in most cases they give up their studies in order to seek some sort of employment to supplement the family income; in other instances they simply lack shoes and clothing.

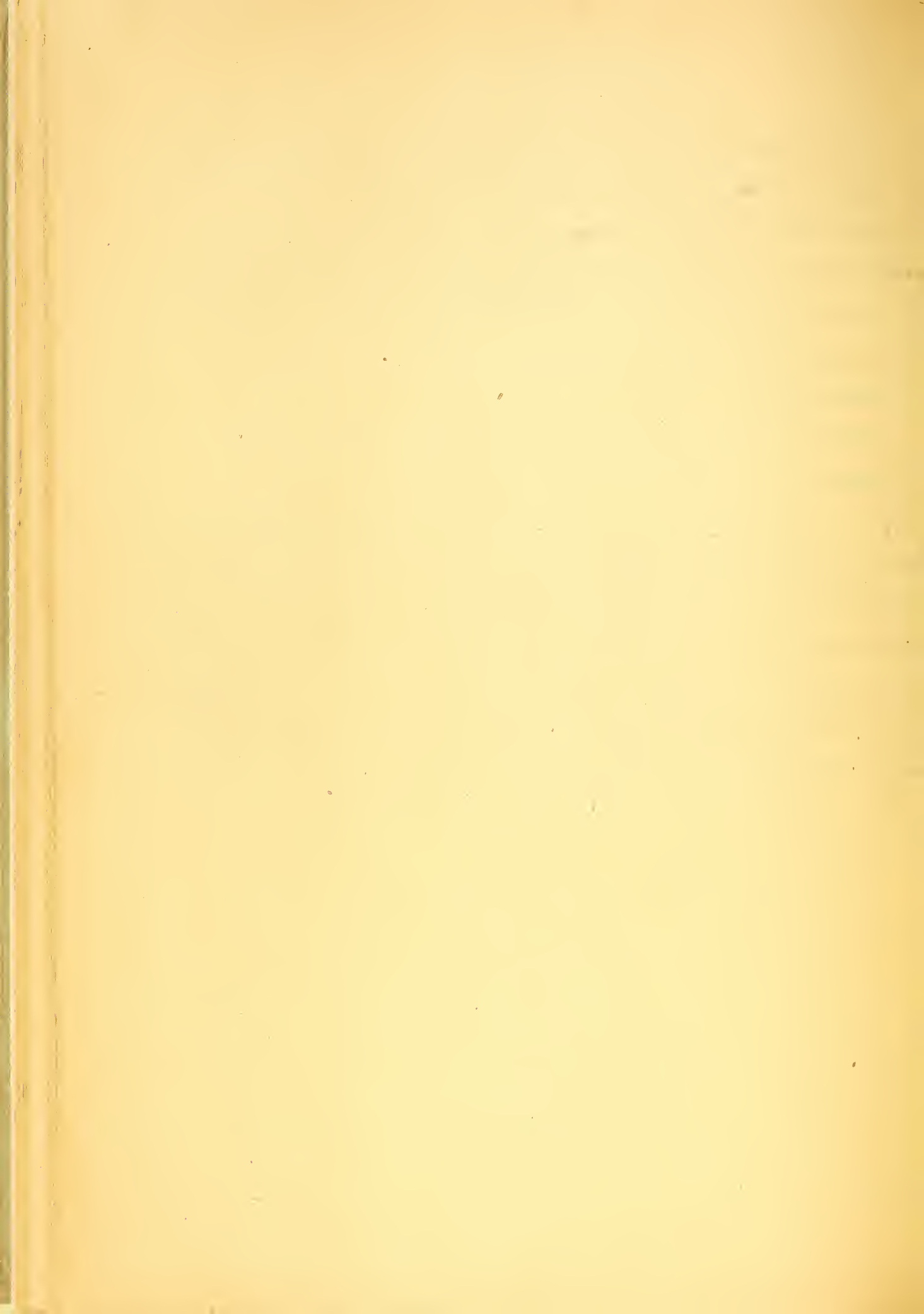


"You can't expect us to go to school barefooted, or in clothes that might fall off at any minute," they explain.

High school graduation even has its disadvantages. The grads are somewhat reluctant to enter service occupations not considered compatible with their educational status, and the limited opportunities for clerical employment are monopolized by Anglo-Saxons.

Whither the new generation? Since the Depression many have found it necessary to accept WPA employment. Since 1940 there has been a perceptible movement from the WPA and WPA-waiting lists into the armed forces. Remarkably enough, the motive for this change is greater security. When you enlist in one of the armed forces you do so for a definite number of years; your future, barring actual combat, is secure in comparison to the prospect of periodic WPA quota reductions and a precarious existence on the WPA "security" wage. As the recruiting publicity points out, a sufficiency of food, clothing, and shelter are assured.

In Key West, because of the peculiarly disadvantaged situation of the city, the major concern of the Cuban girls is to marry a "stranger"--someone who originated outside of Key West. "I don't pay any attention to Key West boys," said a typical girl. "What do you think? I don't want to be on relief the rest of my life and always go around with a big stomach and a house full of children. Key West boys have no future."





So they keep their eyes open and wait. Some of them wait and wait to no end. Others marry visiting boys in the CCC, National Guard, Army, Navy, Marines--in the usually mistaken belief that by getting out of Key West their economic problems will be <sup>even</sup> solved. There are, of course, many Cuban girls who marry Cuban boys, and settle down to raise large families.

The present generation of Cuban youth in Florida has fallen heir to the problems which confront American youth generally, but they are also faced with special problems because of the decline of their traditional industry, their geographic situation, and their race. In attacking their problems the ~~young generation~~ apparently lack the militant spirit, cooperativeness and unity which has characterized the struggles of their fathers. The older generation still fights for its needs through coherent institutions and organizations, but the young Cubans are bewildered individuals standing alone.



### The Spanish-Language Press

The first newspaper published in Key West was El Republicano, established in 1870 and edited in Spanish by Juan Reyes. Another notable Key West paper was El Yara (The Cry), edited by Juan Dolores Poyo; for 20 years this paper was devoted to the cause of Cuban independence; it ceased publication when that independence was achieved in 1898.

But though the Spanish-language press had its ~~beginning~~<sup>Florida</sup> beginning in Key West, today there are no such newspapers being published in that city. In Ybor City, however, two daily papers and one weekly<sup>are</sup> printed entirely in Spanish. The dailies are La Traduccion-La Prensa (The Translation-The Press), a morning paper, and La Gaceta (The Gazette), published in the afternoon. The weekly is El Heraldó Dominical (The Sunday Herald).

In addition there is the weekly, El Internacional, organ of the <sup>seven locals of the</sup> Cigarmakers' International Union (AFL). Its circulation of 5,000 is largely confined to the cigarmakers, and its contents are mostly concerned with matters of special interest to them. Published almost continuously since its founding in 1906, El Internacional has been a potent force in the life of Tampa's cigarmakers, giving expression and direction to their struggle for security.

El Internacional was first a monthly and then a semi-monthly, but for the most part it has been published weekly.

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At intervals it has contained sections in English for the benefit of the increasing number of "cracker" union members, and has included such a section since 1938. Besides local union news, the paper publishes news of the American labor movement generally (with John L. Lewis and the CIO prominently included).

The other newspapers are but slightly less devoted to the cause of progressive labor. It would be strange if this were not the case, as the papers' readers center about the cigar industry, and their advertisers cater to the same group.

These papers are all distributed by subscription; none are sold by news-boys or news-stands. None are members of the large American news syndicates; they simply rewrite items from American, Cuban, and Mexican papers. They use a few photographs, syndicated cartoons and comics of American origin. Besides the editorials and columns by staff and local writers, the papers use interpretive material sent by volunteer correspondents in Havana and Mexico City.

They strongly supported Roosevelt throughout the New Deal era, but were somewhat critical of his proposals for labor conscription, the selective service act, and his remarks which tended to arouse feeling against aliens as "Fifth Columnists." They are ardently anti-Fascist, anti-Nazi, and anti-Falangist. (The overwhelming sympathy of Tampa's Latins for the Spanish Republic was and is reflected in their press.





In matters of local, county, and state politics the papers usually unite in supporting those candidates which are endorsed by the cigarmakers' unions and the various clubs of Ybor City. As the Latins vote quite solidly for these candidates, they are a force to be reckoned with.

It is significant that the papers, though written in Castillian Spanish, often use Cuban expressions and idioms, as well as words of Cuban coinage. There is also a notable sprinkle of English words, and especially American terms such as "New Deal," "Relief," and "home-run."

Although the papers have not consciously campaigned for Americanization, they have had great influence in that direction. Whereas in the beginning they were largely interested in the affairs of Cuba, with each decade they have become more and more devoted to American developments.

For local news these papers serve a great need, but in order to obtain more detailed information about national and international affairs many people subscribe to La Voz (The Voice) and various other Spanish-language newspapers published in New York, Havana, and Mexico City. The young generation prefers the American newspapers because of their greater coverage of sports, comics, motion pictures, radio, and society.

A magazine found in a number of Ybor City shops is El Futuro (The Future), a Marxian (not Communist) monthly published by the University of Labor, Mexico City. Its editor



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is Vicente Lombardo Toledano, leader of the Confederation of Mexican Workers and the international Latin-American Workers' Confederation. Toledano's influence is considerable among the Latin workers of Tampa, many of whom consider him "the outstanding independent scientific revolutionary labor leader in the Western Hemisphere."

### El Radio

The incidence of radios among Florida Cubans is amazingly high, and, since they can be purchased for small weekly payments, they are often the most expensive item in the house. This is a good index of their keen appreciation of music--as is their propensity for playing them at full volume for the benefit of less fortunate neighbors who do not own sets. The radios are ~~normally~~ played without interruption from the time the occupants of the house arise in the morning until they retire in the evening.

The proximity of Cuba to Key West and Tampa makes it possible for the Cuban radio stations to be easily heard in those cities, and the Florida Cubans, except perhaps the young generation, listen to the Cuban programs more often than they do the American. The Cuban programs are almost as diversified as the American programs which they often immitate.

The radio serves as a strong cultural and linguistic tie with Cuba, and the Cuban newscasts keep the Florida





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Cubans well-informed on contemporary thought and developments within the Island Republic. Among those Florida Cubans who do not read English, the newscasts of international events take the place of newspapers.

Far from curtailing Cuban folk music, the radio has increased popular interest and encouraged amateur efforts. It is significant that authentic Cuban music can be heard to an increasing extent over the American networks. And as the radios of Florida Cubans are being tuned with increasing frequency to American programs, with their broad reflection of Americana, they are becoming a potent force for Americanization.

### Conversation

The art of conversation has been highly developed along peculiar lines by the Florida Cubans. Partially or wholly cut off from many sources of culture in the Spanish language, and with many of the older generations illiterate, the Cubans have made conversation an important social and educational activity.

Their rather scant sources of information are utilized to the fullest extent in providing topics for conversation, with current events being discussed for hours on end. A popular saying has it that, "The chief industries of Ybor City are cigar making and bolita, and the chief recreations are love making and arguing." There is <sup>an</sup> ~~an evident~~ tendency among the older men to discuss subjects thoroughly, while



the conversation of the younger men, though centered about sports and women, jumps about promiscuously.

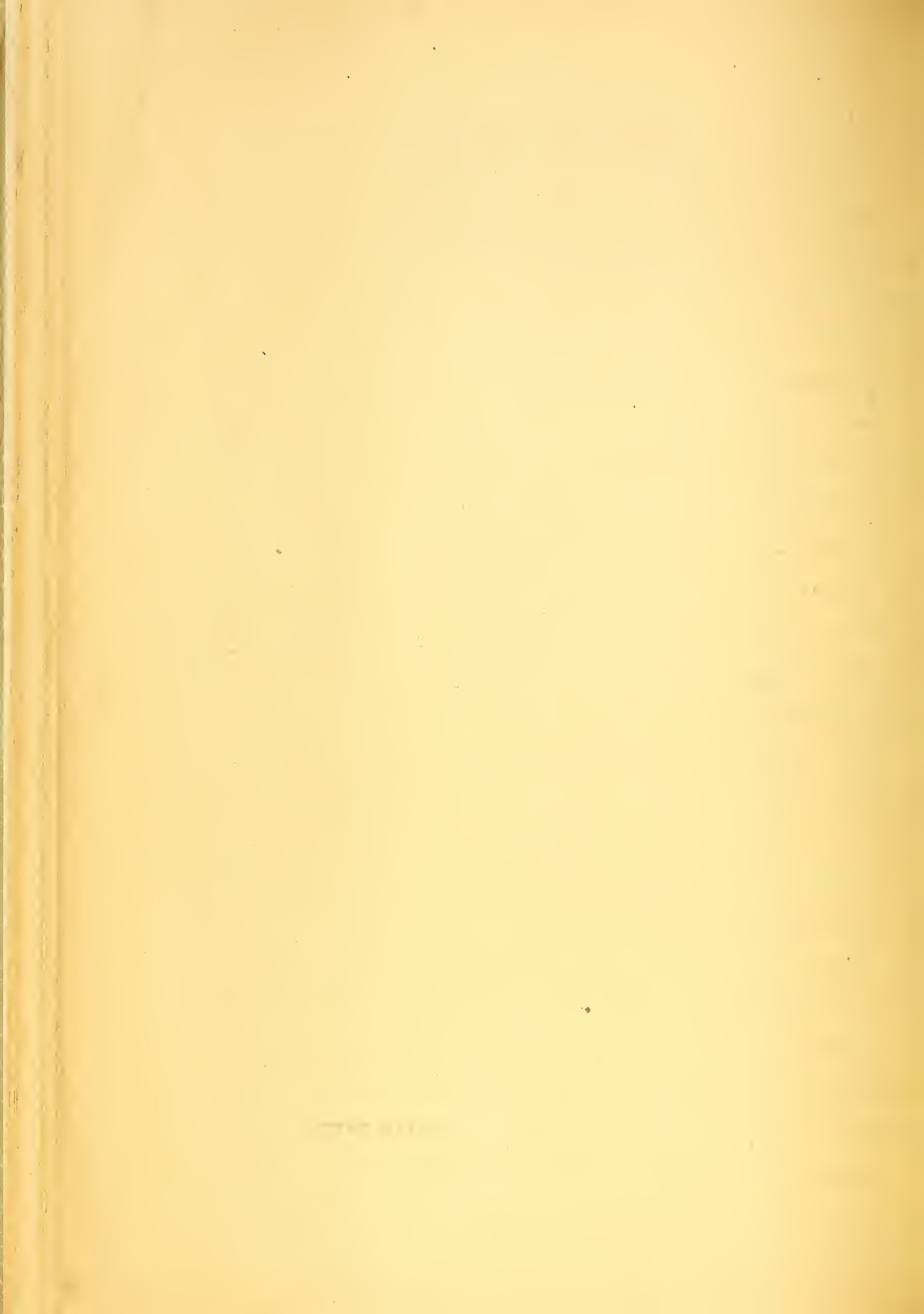
After the manner of most Latins, the Cubans are given to considerable gesticulation while speaking. Moreover, among uneducated Cubans it is common for a group to converse on several subjects simultaneously. This requires that the participants speak in a loud voice. To increase the volume of the voice is also considered an effective means of emphasizing what one has to say--and the result is that conversations quickly reach the shouting point.

They are not at all confused by the conversational cross currents, and, in fact, are able to follow several discussions at once. This practice, and the natural boisterousness and emphasis with which they ordinarily speak, often leads American observers to conclude that a heated argument is taking place and that violence is imminent--when actually the Cubans may be calmly commenting on the weather.

### Libraries

Most of the Cubans who use the public libraries belong to the select but increasing group of high school graduates. The Tampa public library maintains branches in the Latin colonies, with material in Spanish, Italian, and English. In Key West the only library is semi-public, and the fee it charges is sufficient to keep all but a very few residents from making use of its extremely limited and inappropriate material.

Most of the serious reading done by the Cubans is in connection with school work. The majority of the schools have libraries with intelligently selected shelves of books for the various grades. The Tampa schools, especially, have made effective efforts to improve the reading habits and ability of their Latin students.





"God Is Very Discredited"

The above phrase is popular among Florida Cubans, and is often accompanied by the question, "Do you think if there was a God he would let people go hungry?"

Yet the Florida Cubans are not anti-religious, though there are some ardent anti-religionists among them; they are simply non-religious. Theirs is a profound feeling of disillusion acquired over a period of centuries, but it is not an emotion of hatred such as exists so widely in Spain, Mexico, and other countries where the worldly power of the Catholic Church has oppressed the common people.

In Florida the Church has no such power; Church and State, and Church and public education, were permanently severed in this country by the American Revolution, whereas this was not accomplished until quite recently in Mexico, and is yet to be achieved in Spain.

The disinterest of Cubans in affairs of the Church originated in Spain, as many of the Spanish settlers of Cuba had come to the New World in search of religious freedom. And in Cuba the Church was closely allied with the Spanish authorities in opposing the Cuban revolutionary movement, and also in the suppression of Negro slave revolts, the denial of popular education, and censorship of the press. All this was more than enough to destroy the faith and devotion of the Cubans.





Thus to the Cuban immigrant who came to Florida, Spain represented oppression--and Spain and the Church were well-nigh synonymous. Those immigrants who came from small Cuban villages were somewhat more religious than their city-bred brethren, because in the rural areas of Cuba the priests were an integral part of community life, and lived simple lives among the people. But in Key West and Tampa there has never been any such close contact between the clergy and the people; with few exceptions the Catholic priests have been of different nationalities and backgrounds from their congregations.

One of the first acts of the Cuban Republic was to abolish the requirement of the former Spanish Government that all marriages had to be performed by the Catholic Church. This recognition of the legality of civil marriages caused the Catholic Church in Key West and Tampa to lose almost all of their Cuban communicants.

The Cubans came to Florida with a strong desire to earn more money than they ever had before, and this attitude dominated their religious instincts. The proper function of religion is considered to be life-motivating; but since the life motive of most Cubans is to enjoy life, they are not overly concerned about the prospects of a hereafter. This preoccupation with the pursuit of worldly happiness is so intense that it often results in an impractical philosophy which does not include a due regard for even the earthly future.



With characteristic reasoning, the matter has been summed up thus: "We Cubans do not attend Church because we don't want to."

The extent to which they do not attend church is indicated by the following figures. In 1930 less than one percent of the Cubans in Tampa were regular church attenders, although 37 percent were members of clubs. However, some 2,800 claimed to be members of the Catholic Church, and 800 were reported to be Methodists, and 350 were Baptists. This means that many of them adhere to the spirit of Catholicism to the extent of claiming to be Church members, yet they fail to attend Church except at Easter and Christmas. Many of them, as they say, are merely "affiliated with the Church by birth." Probably a majority are given a Catholic christening, marriage, and burial, though they seldom if ever attend Church between these events.

Less than 10 percent of the church-goers are men, and the boys who attend are largely those who are enrolled in Catholic schools. Within the family group the father often ridicules his wife for her church attendance, and his sons, therefore, in order to seem manly, refuse to attend church with their mothers and sisters, and instead go to the clubs with their fathers. "While I was attending church all sorts of ridicule were heaped upon me by my fellow-men," is a common report of the masculine ex-church-goer.





The Cubans have found that their worldly institutions-- unions, political organizations, social-benefit societies-- are best designed to meet their basic worldly needs. This is best demonstrated by the 8,000 union members and 4,500 club members, as compared to a hundred or so church attenders. The economic factor,, especially since the decline of the cigar industry, has been prominently involved, with the result that the Cubans have preferred to pay a small sum each week for health protection, rather than to donate it to the Church which renders them no tangible service in return. A lack of "suitable" clothing has also decreased church attendance.

Masonic orders are quite popular among Cuban men, and since members of such secret societies are excommunicated by the Church, this has also affected Church membership. In recent years there has been a slight increase in the number of Church weddings, but the newly-weds themselves attribute this to their slightly increased ability to pay for a showy Church wedding.

The Catholic <sup>collaboration with</sup> sanction of the Fascist invasion of the Spanish Republic was another serious blow to what little prestige remains to the Church among Florida Cubans. The Church also aroused disfavor by a pulpit campaign for signatures to a petition protesting <sup>and</sup> the proposed <sup>and</sup> Harkin's Birth Control Bill.



Though a tendency to gamble usually goes hand in hand with religious piety, this is not the case with the Florida Cubans, who are thoroughly addicted to games of chance but not to religious creeds. "When I see a prostitute I play number 12 in bolita," he says, and on such a plane his propitiation of the supernatural ends. In the same way he says, "When I dream of sleeping with a woman with her head at one end and mine at the other, I play number 69." In such matters he is an unswerving conformist, and will go to great pains to do whatever he considers necessary to enlist the gods of fortune on his side.

These acts of adjusting conduct according to some traditionally approved method of approach or conciliation are a primitive form of worship, and the diligence with which the uneducated Cuban follows the prescribed modes indicates that one reason why he is not an ardent Christian is simply that he has not been taught to appreciate the highly developed concept of the Christian Deity.





## Sports and Recreation

In their enthusiasm for baseball the Cubans are thoroughly American, for it is by far the most popular organized sport among them. ~~The~~ Cuban boys learn to play baseball as soon as they are old enough, and the various schools and social clubs organize teams that engage in spirited competition. The Cir- culo Cubano has been especially active in promoting baseball, and its teams have been among the best in ~~the city~~. In Key West a Cuban team competes with an American "Conch" team.

Cuban men take a keen interest in the major league games, and are thoroughly familiar with the relative merits of the teams and players. Scoreboards throughout the Cuban colonies post the scores as they are broadcast, and these places attract large crowds which follow the games with keen interest and animated conversation.

The athletic divisions of the Circulo Cubano and the Sociedad Cuba also develop other sports among their members. Their basketball and soccer teams make good records. Boxing is another popular sport, and the matches attract large crowds. The gymnastic equipment and athletic programs of the clubs have been highly successful in keeping the members physically fit-- and in reducing the amount of sick benefits paid by the clubs.

Picnics play an important part in the recreational life of the Cuban communities, and are conducted in typical Latin fashion. Usually they are held in some public park, or at the beaches. Members of the sponsoring organization provide





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transportation, and a reception committee dresses in typical Cuban costumes. If the picnic is held at the beach, swimming precedes the repast of Cuban foods, and in the evening there is much dancing. These festive affairs have been noticeably lacking, however, since the decline of the cigar industry, and there has been no adequate substitute for the entertainment of the elderly people.

Many swimming parties are formed during summer months, with large crowds going to the beaches adjacent to Tampa, especially to Clearwater. Trucks and automobiles formerly left designated spots, carrying passengers for a small fee. As many as 40 people would crowd into a truck, and though they might all be strangers upon departing, by the time they arrived at the beach they would be well-acquainted. This form of transportation has been stopped because it was not properly licensed, and many poor people are now unable to get to the beaches. At Clearwater Beach the Latins tend to congregate on a separate section, as do the ~~Latins~~ <sup>Latin-Americans</sup> Americans and Jews.

Transportation presents no problem to the Key West Cubans, who are surrounded by beaches. They do not go swimming during the winter, and regard tourists as being silly for doing so, as the water is comparatively murky and is said to cause skin irritations. With the beginning of the national defense program, the excellent swimming facilities of the submarine base at Key West were closed to the public.



The American institutions of the weinle roast and the hay ride are becoming popular with the Cubans, especially in Key West.

A conspicuous part of the folkways of the Cuban colonies is their practice of promenading along the main street on Saturday nights. This is the sole form of recreation for many people, who dress in their best clothes and walk up one side of the street and down the other, speaking with friends, window shopping, and occasionally making small purchases. The young men gather in groups, and watch the girls go by. If they are feeling mischievous, they call out Cuba, yama su hijas! (Cuba, call your children!). People also promenade in cars, badly congesting traffic from 6:30 to 9:30 P.M.

In the early days social affairs were mostly family gatherings, with music-making, singing and dancing. Groups of young men would sing serenades from house to house. A popular diversion in Tampa was the first motion picture, a silent film pojected upon a canvas hung against the side of a building.

With the organization of the clubs the social life of the colonies boomed. The recreation divisions of the clubs presented social functions of every description, and also cooperated with the other club departments in presenting affairs for members and the public.





The clubs hold many Saturday night dances and cabarets. The cabarets begin at nine P.M., and continue until four or five o'clock in the morning. Cuban and American music is provided for dancing, drinks and refreshments are served, games are played, prizes awarded, and a theatrical performance is given during the midnight intermission.

In 1929 a group of Circulo Cubano members, at odds with the incumbent club officers, organized a dissident group within the club, which they called La Columna (The Column) of the Circulo Cubano. With the idea of establishing a playground and picnic center, La Columna group made a down payment on five acres of land in West Tampa. The land contained a seven room house, an orange grove, and many shade and ornamental trees.

La Columna group constructed a dance pavillion on the property by raising \$3,000 for materials, and doing the work themselves, often laboring until late at night. Many Tampa organizations rented the grounds and pavillion for social functions, but with the intensification of the Depression, La Columna was unable to finish paying for the land without assistance from the remainder of the Circulo Cubano. This assistance was not forthcoming, and the entire investment was lost.

Though the WPA Recreation Project has done some notable work, playground and recreation facilities are inadequate and poorly equipped. Swimming pools are badly needed in Tampa.



### Holidays and Celebrations

By nature the Cubans are inclined to celebrate any and all occasions with marked enthusiasm, but their festive spirit has been sadly dampened by their economic plight. The truth of the matter is that they are no longer able to purchase the necessary ingredients--and they have no cause for celebration.

Christmas and New Years are observed after the American manner, but Thanksgiving is celebrated with roast pork, black beans and rice, rather than with turkey and cranberry sauce. Hallo'een is especially popular, and is marked by pranks or a masquerade ball, depending upon the age of the celebrants. Easter sometimes causes a temporary blossoming of religious instinct among the women, and bunnies and egg hunts are provided for the children.

Tampa Latins celebrate La Verbena del Tabaco (The Feast of Tobacco) and a Latin-American Carnival. These affairs are celebrated in genuine fashion, with Cuban, Spanish, and Italian folk dances in native costumes.

Tampa's Gasparilla Festival is widely known as a rival of the Mardi Gras of New Orleans. In "honor" of the pirate Jose Gaspar, this tourist attraction features an invasion by a motley "crewe" of the socially elite. The crewe takes over the city, and parades, pageants, and balls are held, climaxed by a King-and-Queen-crowning.





A legend has grown up around a beautiful Cuban girl, whose semi-nude body was covered with gold paint so that she could decorate a cigar factory float in the 1930 Gasparilla parade. Shortly after the parade she was poisoned by the paint, and died two days later. The cigar company would not <sup>did</sup> even pay her funeral expenses, though her family was destitute.

When the FERA took over Key West in 1934 it found that the town lacked a festival. So La Semana Alegre (The Week of Joy) was concocted. But with the affair dominated by non-Cubans, and with most Cubans subsisting on the relief "security" wage, it is not surprising that The Week of Joy has not been all that its name implies. Like the Gasparilla Festival, La Semana Alegre is an effort to capitalize on the Latin atmosphere, and is served up by commercial interests specifically for tourist consumption; ~~it is not a~~ true folk festival.

The Cuban national holidays always bring out the Cuban flag to fly with the American atop the Cuban clubs, and ceremonies are conducted with the Cuban consul officiating. Many people visit the cemeteries where the Cuban patriots are buried, and dances are held until a late hour.

#### Gambling

Gambling in the Cuban colonies, as elsewhere in Florida, is made possible by heavy payments of "hush" money to law enforcement officials. Periodically, gambling is closed down





in various parts of the State to gratify public sentiment  
(and to force payment of back tribute money).

Bolita (little ball) is the most popular gambling game among Cubans, and was introduced to Florida by them; probably it was played for the first time in this country in Key West. The tickets are sold at the bolita house, and by agents who go from door to door. The players buy tickets bearing the number they hope will win. The tickets cost five cents each, and each winning ticket pays the holder \$4.

At the bolita "throwings" a group of interested persons (players, spectators) gather in the bolita house. A tray, holding 100 small balls consecutively numbered, is displayed for examination by the group. The balls are then placed in a bag, which is passed around and thoroughly shaken; finally it is tossed by the bolita operator into the group of spectators, one of whom catches it by one of the balls inside. Closely watched, the operator proceeds to cut the bag, releasing the ball held by the spectator. The number on that ball is the winning number.

The winning numbers of each bolita house are telephoned to all other houses and to various bar-rooms, where they are written on blackboards for interested persons to see. By grapevine the entire colony learns the winning numbers a few minutes after they are posted. Persons holding winning tickets collect their money directly from the bolita house, or from their agent.



When the Depression was at its worst another form of bolita, called pajarito (little bird), was developed, in which persons holding winning numbers received \$6 for one cent. The winning numbers were the last three numbers listed in the New York stock market quotations published in the daily papers.

The Loteria Nacional Cubano is also very popular among Florida Cubans. Tickets are sold by local agents, some of whom are financed locally; that is, they themselves or their sponsors pay on whatever numbers win in the actual lottery, and in the same amounts. The results of the lottery are announced by radio from Havana each Wednesday, a day on which the majority of Cuban-owned radios in Key West and Tampa are tuned to that station, whether inhabitants of the house have bought lottery tickets or not.

The winning numbers are announced by orphans, wards of the Cuban Government, who are benefitted by the net proceeds of the lottery. One orphan calls the winning numbers, and another immediately calls the amount of money won by that number; the result is a monotonous sing-song chant that reverberates throughout the Cuban sections for several hours.

Bolita and lottery are the principal forms of gambling. In Key West alone, the blackboards in the bolita houses list the following bolita establishments: Curro, Orange Inn, Trumbo, Two Friends, Nancy, Broadway, Sunlight, Red House, R. Road, Duval, The Club, Cuba, 8 O'Clock House. A notice on the board





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read:

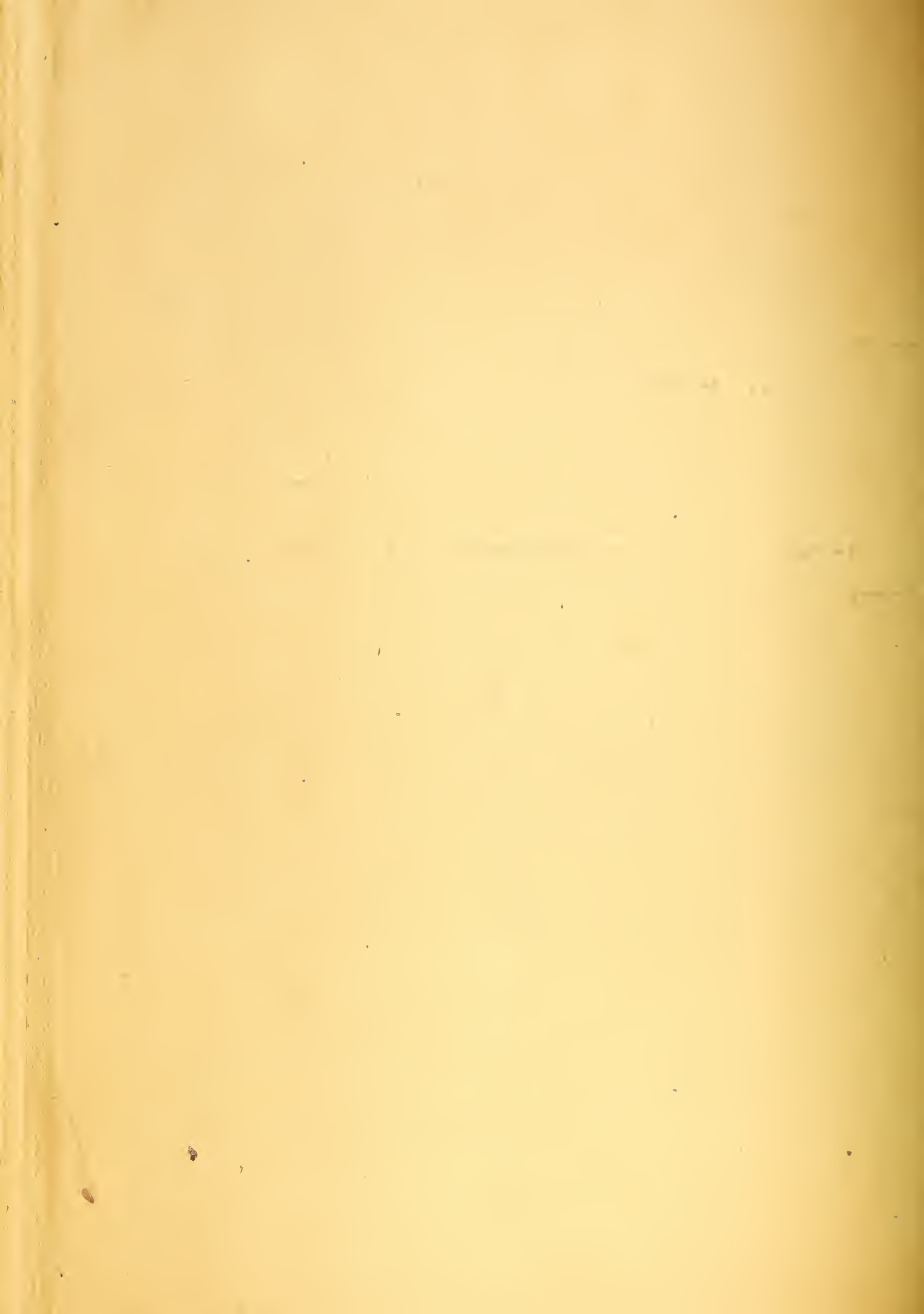
WE PAY WHAT THE TICKET CALLS FOR.

EXAMINE YOUR TICKET BEFORE YOU LEAVE.

Not all gambling among the Cubans is so organized.

Money frequently changes hands in the games of casino, billiards, and dominoes that are played in the clubs and coffee shops. Incidentally, dominoes was introduced to the Spaniards by the Moors, and bolita is based upon the Chinese game of charada that was introduced to Cuba. Peleas de gallos (cock fights) were once popular, but have almost disappeared since being prohibited by law; the imported fighting Cuban cocks, however, continue to strut their stuff in many a Florida backyard.

Other forms of gambling indulged in by Florida Cubans are paragua, a roulette game played with an upright umbrella-like contraption; celo, a dice game; rifa (raffle); monte, a card game; tute, a game played with Spanish cards, with the 8's, 9's, and 10's left out, leaving a deck of 40 cards; guerra (war), a domino game played without partners, and with six dominoes instead of 10; guigui, a form of bolita in which 12 winning numbers are selected instead of one--the player gets three numbers on his five cent ticket, and if those three numbers are among the 12 winners, then he receives \$15 instead of \$4 as in regular bolita.



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*Amul*

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